

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

/057 W

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P R 251200Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 096

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KARACHI

AMEMBASSY LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ISLAMABAD 1991

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PK, PINT

SUBJECT: ELECTION CAMPAIGN - TEN DAYS TO GO

SUMMARY: WITH ONLY TEN DAYS TO GO BEFORE THE ELECTION, THE PPP COUNTEROFFENSIVE IS STALLED AND THE MOMENTUM REMAINS WITH THE PNA. THE CAMPAIGN REMAINS REMARKABLY OPEN AND FREE AND IS BEING CONDUCTED ALONG WESTERN STANDARDS OF ELECTIONEERING FREEDOM. THE PPP CAMPAIGN THIS WEEK WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY A LARGE BHUTTO RALLY IN LAHORE, BUT THE ANIMATION AND SPARK OF THE 1970 ELECTION WERE MISSING. PARTY WORKERS ARE INCREASINGLY DISMAYED BY THE PPP'S ELECTION PROSPECTS AND CIVIL SERVANTS ARE BECOMING APPREHENSIVE OF HELPING THE PPP IN THE CAMPAIGN. THE PARTY'S TROUBLE SPOTS REMAIN THE URBAN AREAS IN THE SIND, MAJOR CITIES IN THE PUNJAB AND, INCREASINGLY, RURAL PUNJAB AS WELL.

THE PNA CAMPAIGN IS CHARACTERIZED BY GROWING CONFIDENCE AND ASSURANCE THE ALLIANCE IS DESTINED FOR VICTORY. ASGHAR KHAN HAD THE LARGEST ELECTION RALLY YET IN KARACHI FEBRUARY 20 WITH
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REPORTS OF UP TO A MILLION PEOPLE ATTENDING. THE PNA IS EMPHASIZING IT WILL NOT ALLOW MANIPULATION OF THE POLLS AND IS CONFIDENTLY SAYING IT HAS ALREADY WON THE ELECTIONS.

THE US HAS RECIVED SOME ATTENTION WITH THE TRADITIONAL CHARGE THE CIA IS BANKROLLING THE OPPOSITION AND THE CONTENTION THAT FORMER AMBASSADOR FARLAND'S RECENT PRIVATE VISIT WAS CONNECTED

WITH THE ELECTION. THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN SIND IS INCREASINGLY TENSE AND LARGER IN KARACHI.

ALTHOUGH MANY IN THE PPP ADMIT IT LOOKS BAD FOR THE PARTY, THEY CONTEND THE PM WILL ONCE AGAIN WORK HIS POLITICAL MAGIC AND SAVE THE PARTY IN THE LAST FEW DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN. TO AN INCREASING NUMBER OF PARTY WORKERS, HOWEVER, THIS SOUNDS LIKE WHISTLING IN THE DARK; UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE RESULT AND CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE CONTINUE TO GROW. END SUMMARY.

1. THE WIDELY EXPECTED PPP COUNTEROFFENSIVE SPUTTERED DURING THE SEVENTH WEEK OF THE PAKISTAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN, PPP WORKERS ARE INCREASINGLY DEJECTED, AND THE MOMENTUM REMAINS WITH THE OPPOSITION PNA. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO REGAIN THE INITIATIVE AND HE IS REACTING TO PNA ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS. THE CONSENSUS IS THAT THE OPPOSITION WILL BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN ITS HARD-HITTING CAMPAIGN THROUGH ELECTION DAY.

2. CAMPAIGN ATMOSPHERICS - THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN CONTINUES TO BE REMARKABLY OPEN AND FREE. DESPITE ITS OFTEN-EXPRESSED PRE-ELECTION APPREHENSIONS, THE OPPOSITION HAS OBVIOUSLY HAD ACCESS TO ALL CAMPAIGN TOOLS INCLUDING VEHICLES, PRINTING PRESSES AND LOUDSPEAKERS AND HAS THE ABILITY AND FREEDOM TO ORGANIZE PUBLIC MEETINGS AND PROCESSIONS. PNA FLAGS ARE SEEN FLYING THROUGHOUT URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, AN INDICATION THAT THE ELECTORATE DOES NOT FEAR GOVERNMENT RETALIATORY MEASURES DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND THAT THE GOP HAS DECIDED NOT TO TAKE SUCH MEASURES. CONSIDERING THE LEVEL OF VITUPERATION - NOT EXTRAORDINARY BY SUBCONTINENTAL STANDARDS - INCLUDING THE USUAL SCATALOGICAL AND

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QUESTIONABLE ANCESTRAL REFERENCES TO VARIOUS CANDIDATES INCLUDING THE PM, ALL OBSERVERS ADMIT THE CAMPAIGN REMAINS SURPRISINGLY UNHAMPERED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS GENUINELY TO HAVE ABJURED REPRESSIVE ACTIONS AND THE CAMPAIGN IS BEING CONDUCTED ALONG WESTERN, RATHER THAN THIRD WORLD, STANDARDS OF ELECTIONEERING FREEDOM.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 ISLAMABAD 1991

3. PPP - THE PPP HAS INTENSIFIED ITS CAMPAIGN THIS PAST WEEK WHILE CONTINUING TO FOCUS ON THE PUNJAB. THE CENTERPIECE WAS BHUTTO'S RALLY ON FEBRUARY 20 IN LAHORE WITH AN ESTIMATED 250-300,000 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE. OBSERVERS NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT WORKERS WERE GIVEN THE DAY OFF WITH PAY TO ATTEND THE RALLY, AND THE PM LACKED THE SPARK, ANIMATION AND ENTHUSIASM WHICH CHARACTERIZED HIS 1970 ELECTION SPEECHES. THE PPP IS STILL IMPORTING SPEAKERS - SUCH AS MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO AND PIRZADA - FROM THE SIND FOR THE PUNJAB CAMPAIGN, HIGHLIGHTING THE LACK, EXCEPT FOR KAUSER NIAZI, OF ANY EFFECTIVE PUNJAB PUBLIC SPEAKERS IN THE PPP CAMP.

4. BOTH PPP AND GOVERNMENT SOURCES TELL US PPP WORKERS ARE INCREASINGLY DISMAYED BY THE PARTY'S ELECTIONS PROSPECTS AND THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAS NOT YET CAUGHT FIRE. THERE ARE REPORTS OF A FEW DEFECTIONS OF PPP LEASSER FRY TO THE PNA, AND WORD THAT OTHER PPP WORKERS ARE SITTING ON THEIR HANDS. CIVIL SERVANTS ARE REPORTEDLY BECOMING APPREHENSIVE OF HELPING THE PPP IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CAMPAIGN. THE DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE IN SARGHODA - A PPP STRONGHOLD IN 1970 - HAS NOTED THAT THE CIVIL SERVICE HAS BEEN INTIMIDATED BY PNA THREATS TO TAKE VENGEANCE, ONCE IT TAKES POWER, AGAINST CIVIL SERVANTS WHO WORK FOR THE PPP. ASGHAR KNAH HAS ALSO ENCOURAGED PNA WORKERS TO BURN ANY GOVERNMENT JEEPS WHICH ARE USED IN THE PPP CAMPAIGN.

5. THE TROUBLE SPOTS FOR THE PPP REMAIN THOSE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY. POLITICAL OBSERVERS IN KARACHI BELIEVE THE PNA WILL WIN AT LEAST EIGHT OF THE ELEVEN SEATS IN THE CITY. HYBER-ABAD SEEMS INCREASINGLY SAFE FOR THE PNA AS WELL, FOLLOWING A

SHOOT-OUT DURING WHICH A MEMBER OF THE PROMINENT AND PNA-SUPPORT-
ING TALPUR FAMILY WAS KILLED. CONSULATE KARACHI BELIEVES,
HOWEVER, THAT PPP RURAL STRENGTH SHOULD ENSURE THE PARTY A
MAJORITY OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEATS IN THE PROVINCE.

6. THE PPP ALSO FACES TROUBLE IN THE MAJOR URBAN AREAS OF THE
PUNJAB, SUCH AS LAHORE, LYALLPUR AND MULTAN, WHICH ARE THE VERY
REGIONS WHERE THE PARTY WAS STRONGEST IN 1970. THE PN, STILL
ATTEMPTING TO TURN THE CAMPAIGN AROUND, WILL ADDRESS A RALLY IN
LYALLPUR THIS WEEKEND, AND WILL BE GOING TO KARACHI ON MARCH
SECOND TO ADDRESS WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN BILLED AS A "MASSIVE"
RALLY. EARLIER IN THE WEEK HE WORKED THE G.T. ROAD CORRIDOR
BETWEEN LAHORE AND PINDI, WITH WE ARE TOLD, APPARENTLY LIMITED
IMPACT. THERE IS INCREASING TALK IN PPP AND GOVERNMENT CIRCLES
OF THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PPP GETTING NO BETTER THAN 55-60 PER
CENT OF THE PUNJAB NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEATS. THIS REFLECTS
INCREASING AWARENESS OF INROADS BY THE OPPOSITION IN THE PROV-
INCE'S RURAL AREAS, REPORTED EARLIER BY SAME SOURCES.

7. PNA - THE PNA CAMPAIGN THE PAST WEEK WAS CHARACTERIZED BY
GROWING CONFIDENCE AND ASSURANCE IN THE OPPOSITION CAMP THAT IT
WAS DESTINED FOR VICTORY. THE HIGHLIGHT OF PNA ACTIVITIES WAS
ASGHAR KHAN'S RALLY IN KARACHI ON FEBRUARY 20. THE ELECTION
PROCESSION STARTING AT THE AIRPORT OOK OVER ELEVEN HOURS AND
THE ESTIMTES OF THOSE ATTENDING WENT AS HIGH AS ONE MILLION
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PEOPLE. IT IS PROBABLY THE LARGEST ELECTION MEETING YET HELD
AND IS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE SNOWBALL EFFECT OF THE INCREAS-
INGLY AGGRESSIVE AND CONFIDENT PNA CAMPAIGN.

8. THEMES - ELECTION THEMES HAVE NOT CHANGED GREATLY DURING THE
PAST WEEK. THE PNA, MORE CONFIDENT WITH EACH WEEK, IS STILL
EMPHASIZING THAT THEY WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY PPP MANIPULATION AT
THE POLLS. ASGHAR KHAN SAID IN KARACHI THAT THE PROPLE HAVE
ALREADY DECIDED THEY WANT THE PNA TO RULE, AND ANY RESULT TO THE
CONTRARY WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED BY THE OPPOSITION. THE RETIRED
AIR MARSHAL HAS ALSO STATED THAT WHEN ELECTED, THE PNA WILL SEE
THAT THE NOW BANNED NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY (NAP) IS DECLARED
LEGAL. THE PPP HAS SAID THT THIS IS FURTHER PROOF OF THE ANTI-
STATE CHARACTER OF ASGHAR KHAN AND HIS PNA COLLEAGUES. INFLATION
AND CORREUPTION ARE STILL TWO OF THE MOST POPULAR AND EFFECTIVE
PNA THEMES. THE PPP IS ON THE DEFENSIVE, TRYING TO REFUTE PNA
RHETORIC AND EMPHASIZING THAT THE OPPOSITION COULD NOT RULE AS
ONE PARTY AND WOULD PLUNGE THE COUNTRY INTO CHAOS.

9. FOREIGN THEMES - ALTHOUGH DOMESTIC CONCERNS STILL HAVE CENTER
STAGE IN CAMPAIGN RHETORIC, THE UNITED STATES HAS, FOR VARIOUS REA-
SONS, BEEN MENTIONED THE PAST WEEK. PAKISTAN IS PRONE TO CONS-
PIRACY THEORIES, AND THE PNA CAMPAIGN IS REPORTEDLY WELL-FUNDED.

AS IS TRADITIONAL IN PAKISTANI ELECTIONS, THERE IS NOT SURPRISINGLY A WIDE-SPREAD RUMOR, UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO WIDELY BELIEVED, THAT THE CIA IS BANKROLLING THE OPPOSITION CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH PPP LEADERS HAVE TALKED ABOUT "FOREIGN SUPPORT" FOR THE PNA, THEY HAVE NOT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE PUBLICLY AIRMED THE CHARGE OF CIA COVERT FUNDING FOR THE OPPOSITION.

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P R 251200Z FEB 77
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 ISLAMABAD 1991

10. FORMER AMBASSADOR FARLAND'S PRIVATE VISIT TO PAKISTAN SEVERAL WEEKS AGO ALSO GAVE RISE TO PERVASIVE RUMORS THAT HE WAS HERE OFFICIALLY TO INFLUENCE THE ELECTION RESULTS. EMBASSY PROTESTATIONS TO THE CONTRARY, SUCH RUMORS SEEM GENERALLY ACCEPTED AS TRUE. THE US WAS ALSO MENTIONED BY FEDERAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT MINISTER AND PUNJAB PPP GENERAL SECRETARY MIRAJ KHALID IN A SPEECH IN RAWALPINDI THIS PAST WEEK. KHALID IMPLIED THAT THE US WAS OPPOSED TO BHUTTO'S REELECTION SINCE WE FEARED THAT IF PAKISTAN OBTAINED THE REPROCESSING PLANT, IT WOULD OFFER A NUCLEAR UMBRELLA TO THE MUSLIM MIDDLE EAST. WE HAVE NOT SEEN ANY PLAY IN THE MEDIA GIVEN TO THIS ACCUSATION OR TO OTHERS. IT IS ALL, SO FAR, WORD OF MOUTH.

11. LAW AND ORDER - THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE SIND GROWS INCREASINGLY TENSE AND OUR CONSULATE GENERAL REPORTS THAT LARGE-SCALE CAMPAIGN VIOLENCE IS WIDELY EXPECTED IN KARACHI. THE BLAME FOR THE DETERIORATING LAW AND ORDER

SITUATION CANNOT BE SQUARELY PLACED ON EITHER SIDE; BOTH HAVE
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EXACERBATED THE SITUATION. THE POLICE HAVE SO FAR REMAINED
NEUTRAL AND HAVE ATTEMPTED TO DEAL FAIRLY WITH LAW AND ORDER
DIFFICULTIES. THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE OTHER THREE
PROVINCES SEEMS RELATIVELY TRANQUIL, ALTHOUGH MINOR ALTER-
CATIONS BETWEEN THE OPPOSING SIDES ARE NOT UNUSUAL.

12. AS A PRESAGE OF THINGS TO COME IF THE PNA WINS, PPP
WORKERS IN THE SIND ARE NOTING THAT SENATOR KAMAL AZFAR,
PPP NA CANDIDATE IN KARACHI AND BHUTTO CONFIDANT, HAS TOLD
HIS CAMPAIGN WORKERS THAT THE PPP WILL NOT ALLOW A PNA
VICTORY. IF IT SEEMS THE PNA IS WINNING, THE PARTY WILL
TAKE ANY ANBHALL NECESSARY ACTIONS TO ENSURE VICTORY.

13. MEDIA, LABOR AND STUDENTS - MEDIA COVERAGE THIS PAST
WEEK REMAINS RELATIVELY UNCHANGED. THE VERNACULAR PRESS
IS GIVING SOMEWHAT MORE COVERAGE TO THE PNA, DUE IN PART TO
PNA THREATS TO NEWSPAPER OWNERS THAT THEY SHOULD GIVE MORE
SPACE TO OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES. LABOR AND STUDENTS STILL
REMAIN QUIESCENT. BHUTTO MET WITH LABOR LEADERS ON THE 19TH
AND ASKED THAT THEY DECLARE THEIR PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE PPP.
THE LEADERS HAVE GENERALLY REMAINED ON THE SIDELINES, HOWEVER,
BOTH BECAUSE OF UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE ELECTION OUTCOME AND
ALSO BECAUSE THEY DO NOT SEE EITHER SIDE AS BEING ESPECIALLY
MORE ATTRACTIVE TO LABOR THAN THE OTHER. THE MAIN STUDENT
ACTIVITY SEEMS RESTRICTED TO ORGANIZATIONAL WORK BY THE
RELIGIOUS JAMAT-I-ISLAMI PARTY'S STUDENT BRANCH.

14. THE LOOK AHEAD - MANY MEDIA PEOPLE AND PPP WORKERS,
WHEN ASKED WHERE THE CAMPAIGN IS HEADING, ADMIT IT LOOKS
BAD FOR THE PPP BUT CONTEND THE PRIME MINISTER WILL ONCE
AGAIN WORK HIS MAGIC AND IN THE LAST FEW DAYS PULL A RABBIT
OUT OF THE HAT. TO SOME IN THE PPP, HOWEVER, THIS SOUNDS
INCREASINGLY LIKE WHISTLING IN THE DARK AND THE UNCERTAINTY
AS TO THE RESULT, ASTONISHMENT AT THE OPPOSITION STRENGTH,
AND CONCERN ABOUT THE IMMEDIATE AND LONGER TERM FUTURE
CONTINUE TO GROW IN PAKISTAN.

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15. EARLY NEXT WEEK WE WILL BE PREPARING TWO REPORTS, IN
ADDITION TO OUR WEEKLY ROUNDUP, GIVING OUR ASSESSMENT OF
WHERE THE CAMPAIGN IS HEADING AND WHAT IT MAY MEAN FOR
PAKISTAN AND US/PAK RELATIONS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION CAMPAIGNS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ISLAMA01991
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770067-0103
Format: TEL
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770210/aaaaaimd.tel
Line Count: 333
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 20411fbf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27-Oct-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3230611
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTION CAMPAIGN - TEN DAYS TO GO SUMMARY: WITH ONLY TEN DAYS TO GO BEFORE THE ELECTION, THE PPP COUNTEROFFENSIVE IS STALLED AND THE MOMENTUM REMAI
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Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009